

over 30,000 caribou there. I saw them peacefully coexisting.

So, when you take away their real arguments and you see it firsthand that you can drill for oil and that you can do it in an environmentally friendly manner, what is the bottom line for why some of these environmental extremists don't want us to drill? Well, we don't have to guess. This is what the president of the Sierra Club says. His name is Carl Pope, executive director of the Sierra Club: "We are better off without cheap gas." They don't want gas prices to go down.

Tell the single mom in Orlando who just paid 80 bucks to fill up her minivan that she is better off without cheap gas. Tell the thousands of airline employees who just lost their jobs because of skyrocketing fuel that they're better off without cheap gas. Tell the people in Orlando, Florida who are losing their jobs in the tourism industry because tourism is down that they're better off without cheap gas. Tell the small businessman who has just had to lay off his employees because he can't make the payroll anymore because of gasoline prices that he's better off without cheap gas. Tell the school districts that are having to go to 4-day-a-week school because they can't afford the gas for their buses that they're better off without cheap gas.

Let's bring some sanity back into this program. Let's have a vote, up or down, on the American Energy Act. Let's have it right now, this month, before we adjourn.

FREE TRADE AGREEMENTS

The SPEAKER pro tempore. The Chair recognizes the gentleman from Illinois (Mr. WELLER) for 5 minutes.

Mr. WELLER of Illinois. Mr. Speaker, I rise today to ask the question: Why is the House of Representatives withdrawing from trade? Why is the House of Representatives drawing away from our need to export products to good markets?

The economic statistics speak volumes. This past week, we saw 3.3 percent economic growth for the last quarter. We'd all like to see it better, but what was interesting was that, of that 3.3 percent economic growth, almost all of it, in fact 3.1 percent economic growth, resulted from trade and from exports. So the good news in the economy today is that we're expanding our exports, and if we did not have the opportunity to export products, our economy would really be in bad shape because it's the export market that's keeping this economy moving forward with manufactured goods, agricultural goods, services, and other products.

Today, we are fortunate to have 16 bilateral agreements with other nations, many in our own hemisphere in the Americas, and we're fortunate to enjoy a trade surplus with all of them. We voted on these trade agreements in the House. Those who opposed them said, you know, if we have trade agree-

ments, we always lose. Well, the interesting thing is, with the Dominican Republic-Central America Free Trade Agreement and with the Chilean Free Trade Agreement, we've seen the results. American farmers, American manufacturers and American workers are winning because we have a trade surplus with those countries today. In fact, we had a trade deficit with Central America before DR-CAFTA, and today, we have a trade surplus. So trade agreements win.

That's why I was so concerned when a spokesman for the Speaker of the House explained her refusal to schedule a vote on the Colombian trade agreement: You know, the economy is bad and trade agreements are bad for America. We can't have a vote on a trade agreement, because somehow that hurts us.

All you have to do is look at the facts, and you'll see that trade and exports are good for America. My State and the district that I represent in Illinois are trade dependent. We depend on exports to create jobs as does the rest of America whether it's union workers who make Caterpillar bulldozers in Joliet or in Decatur or in Peoria or whether it's farmers in Bureau County who are growing corn or soybeans. We depend on our exports, on the export market, to create jobs and to raise our incomes. Frankly, it's the export market today that's the engine of economic growth. We have before this House a good trade agreement. It's the U.S.-Colombia trade agreement. "Trade promotion agreement" is the technical term.

Colombia is not only the oldest democracy in Latin America; it is also the second largest Spanish-speaking country, a market of 42 million consumers. It's a country that has made tremendous progress. In fact, our ally Colombia, which is a democracy, has a very popular president. President Uribe is the most popular elected president in all of the Americas. He has an over 80 percent approval rating. Compare that with the United States House of Representatives, which, I think, has a 16 percent approval rating from our own citizens. Clearly, he has made progress. He inherited a civil war. He has made progress in reducing violence. He is bringing those who committed atrocities during the civil war, on both the left and the right, to trial to be held accountable. He is going after the narco-traffickers who have jeopardized the security of that country.

It's interesting to know that 71 percent of Colombians today say they feel more secure under President Uribe while 73 percent say Uribe respects human rights. Homicides are down 40 percent. Kidnappings are down 76 percent. In fact, the murder rate in Colombia is the lowest in 15 years, and it's actually lower than that of Washington, D.C.'s. So, if you're a citizen of Colombia, you're safer than a tourist or a citizen who is walking the streets of Washington, D.C. when it comes to being a victim of violence.

The bottom line is the U.S.-Colombia trade agreement is good for America. There are those who always oppose trade, and they always have an excuse. They say, you know, in the history of Colombia, there has been some violence, and everyone acknowledges that. President Uribe and his government have made tremendous progress. Then they say, well, there has been violence against labor leaders. Yes, there has been. President Uribe and everyone involved acknowledge that, but they've made tremendous progress. The bottom line is, under President Uribe, Colombia is a safer and better place.

Colombia deserves a vote. We need to bring the U.S.-Colombia trade agreement to this floor and to vote on it up or down. I believe it will pass with a bipartisan majority, and American workers will be the winners.

RECESS

The SPEAKER pro tempore. Pursuant to clause 12(a) of rule I, the Chair declares the House in recess until noon today.

Accordingly (at 11 o'clock and 13 minutes a.m.), the House stood in recess until noon.

□ 1200

AFTER RECESS

The recess having expired, the House was called to order by the Speaker pro tempore (Mr. CAPUANO) at noon.

PRAYER

The Most Reverend James A. Tamayo, Bishop of the Diocese of Laredo, Texas, offered the following prayer:

Heavenly Father, in Your wisdom, You created man and woman and called us to be stewards of Your creation. As this new day begins for the Congress of the United States, we invoke Your presence in our deliberations and activities.

We represent communities from diverse parts of this great Nation. Although we travel to our Nation's Capitol from different directions, as U.S. legislators, let us be steadfast in our solidarity to seek the common path that leads to the betterment of all people in our Nation.

Noble and valiant men and women of different cultures and ethnic heritages contributed to the establishment of democracy in the United States of America. Strengthen our resolve to do good. We accept the challenge to listen to one another, to support one another, and to respond generously to those most in need.

This we pray in Your Holy Name.
Amen.

THE JOURNAL

The SPEAKER pro tempore. The Chair has examined the Journal of the